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Diversity of Revelation

Since there is only one Truth, must we not conclude that there is only one Revelation, one sole Tradition possible? To this we reply, first of all, that Truth and Revelation are not absolutely equivalent terms since Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas Revelation, or the Tradition derived from it, belongs to the formal order, and this indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and thus plurality; the grounds for the existence and nature of form are expression, limitation, differentiation. What enters into form thereby enters also into number, hence into repetition and diversity; the formal principle—inspired by the infinity of the divine Possibility—confers diversity on this repetition. One could conceive, it is true, that there might be only one Revelation or Tradition for our human world and that diversity might be realized through other worlds, unknown to man or even unknowable by him; but this would imply a failure to understand that what determines the difference among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles. For thousands of years humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches constituting as many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different and so original demands a differentiated refraction of the one Truth. Let us note that this is not always a question of race, but more often of human groups, very diverse perhaps, but nonetheless subject to mental conditions which, taken as a whole, make of them sufficiently homogeneous spiritual recipients, though this fact does not prevent individuals from being able to leave their frameworks, for the human collectivity never has anything absolute about it. This being so, we can say that the diverse Revelations do not really contradict one another since they do not apply to the same receptacle and since God never addresses the same message to two or more receptacles having a divergent character, that is, corresponding analogically to dimensions that are formally incompatible; a contradiction can arise only between things situated on the same level. The apparent antinomies between Traditions are like differences of language or symbol; contradictions are an aspect of the human receptacles, not of God; diversity in the world is a result of its remoteness from the divine Principle, which amounts to saying

that the Creator cannot will both that the world should be and that it should not be the world.

If Revelations more or less exclude one another, this is so of necessity since God, when He speaks, expresses Himself in an absolute mode; but this absoluteness concerns the universal content rather than the form, to which it applies only in a relative and symbolical sense, for the form is a symbol of the content and so too of humanity as a whole, to which precisely this content is addressed. It cannot be that God would compare the diverse Revelations from the outside as might a scholar; He keeps Himself as it were at the center of each Revelation as if it were the only one. Revelation speaks an absolute language because God is absolute, not because the form is absolute; in other words the absoluteness of the Revelation is absolute in itself, but relative in its form.

The language of the sacred Scriptures is divine, but at the same time it is necessarily the language of men; it is thus made for men and could be divine only in an indirect manner. This incommensurability between God and our means of expression appears clearly in the Scriptures, where neither our words nor our logic are adequate to the celestial intention; the language of mortals does not *a priori* envision things *sub specie aeternitatis*. The uncreated Word shatters created speech while directing it toward the Truth; in this way it manifests its transcendence in relation to the limitations of human logic; man must be able to overcome these limits if he wishes to attain the divine meaning of the words, and he overcomes them in metaphysical knowledge, the fruit of pure intellection, and in a certain fashion also in love, when he touches the essences. To wish to reduce divine Truth to the conditionings of earthly truth is to forget that there is no common measure between the finite and the Infinite.

The absoluteness of Revelation demands its unicity; but such unicity cannot be produced on the level of facts to the point of realizing a fact which is unique of its kind, that is, which constitutes on its own what amounts to an entire genus. Reality alone is unique, on whatever level it is considered: God, universal Substance, divine Spirit immanent in this Substance; but there are "relatively unique" facts, such as Revelation, for since all is relative and since even principles must allow for exceptions—at least in appearance—insofar as they enter into contingencies, unicity must be able to occur on the plane of facts; if unique facts did not exist in any fashion, diversity would

be absolute, which is a contradiction pure and simple. The two must both be capable of manifesting themselves, unicity as well as diversity; but the two manifestations are necessarily relative, and the one must limit the other. It results from this on the one hand that diversity cannot abolish unity, which is its substance, and on the other hand that unity or unicity must be contradicted by diversity on its own plane of existence; in other words, in every manifestation of unicity a compensatory diversity must be maintained, and indeed a unique fact occurs only in a part and not in the whole of a cosmos. It could be said that a given fact is unique insofar as it represents God for a given environment, but not insofar as it exists; this existence does not abolish the symbol, however, but repeats it outside the framework within which the unique fact occurred, though on the same plane. Existence, which conveys the divine Word, does not abolish the unicity of a given Revelation within its providential field, but it repeats the manifestation of the Word outside this field; it is thus that diversity, without abolishing the metaphysically necessary manifestation of unicity, nonetheless contradicts it outside a particular framework, though on the same level, in order to show in this way that the uncreated and non-manifested Word alone possesses absolute unicity.

If the objection is raised that at the moment when a Revelation occurs it is nonetheless unique for the world, and not for a part of the world alone, we would reply that diversity does not necessarily occur in simultaneity, but extends also to temporal succession, and this is clearly the case when it is a question of Revelations. Moreover, a unicity of fact must not be confused with a unicity of principle; we do not deny the possibility of a fact unique to the world in a certain period, but that of a fact unique in an absolute sense. A fact appearing unique in space is not so in time, and conversely; but even within each of these conditions of existence, it could never be affirmed that a fact is unique of its kind—for it is the genus or quality, not the particularity, which is in question—for we can measure neither time nor space, and still less other modes that elude us.

This whole doctrine is clearly illustrated by the following example: the sun is unique in our solar system, but it is not so in space; we can see other suns since they are located in space as is ours, but we do not see them as suns. The unicity of our sun is belied by the multiplicity of the fixed stars without thereby ceasing to be valid within the system that is ours under Providence; hence the unicity is manifested in the

part, not in the totality, which the part nonetheless represents for us; by the divine Will it "is" thus the totality, though only for us and only insofar as our mind, whose scope is likewise willed by God, does not go beyond forms; but even in this case the part "is" totality as far as its spiritual efficacy is concerned.

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We observe on earth the existence of diverse races, whose differences are "valid" since there are no "false" as opposed to "true" races; we observe as well the existence of multiple languages, and no one thinks of contesting their legitimacy; the same is true for the sciences and arts. Now it would be astonishing if this diversity did not also occur on the religious plane, that is, if the diversity of human receptacles did not involve a diversity of divine contents—from the point of view of form, not of essence. But just as a man appears, within the framework of each race, simply as "man" and not as a "White" or a "Yellow", and just as each language appears in its own sphere as "language" and not as such and such a language among others, so each religion is necessarily "the religion" on its own plane without any comparative relativization, which would be senseless in view of the end to be attained; to speak of "religion" is to speak of "unique religion"; explicitly to practice one religion is implicitly to practice them all.

An idea or enterprise that comes into collision with insurmountable obstacles is contrary to the nature of things; now the ethnic diversity of humanity and the geographical extent of the earth suffice to render highly unlikely the axiom of one unique religion for all and on the contrary highly likely—to say the least—the need for a plurality of religions; in other words the idea of a single religion does not escape contradiction if one takes account of its claims to absoluteness and universality, on the one hand, and the psychological and physical impossibility of their realization, on the other, not to mention the antinomy between such claims and the necessarily relative character of all religious mythology; only pure metaphysics and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal. As for "mythology", it is indispensable—apart from its intrinsic content of truth and efficacy—for enabling metaphysical and essential truth to "gain a footing" in a given human collectivity.

Religion is a "supernaturally natural" fact, which proves its truth—from the point of view of extrinsic proofs—by its human universality, so that the plurality and ubiquity of the religious phenomenon constitute a powerful argument in favor of religion as such. Just as a plant makes no mistake in turning toward the light, so man makes no mistake in following Revelation and therefore Tradition. There is something infallible in the natural instinct of animals and also in the "supernatural instinct" of men; but man is the only "animal" capable of going against nature as such, whether wrongly by violating it or else by transcending it.

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